

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

April 8, 2021

3:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Shelley Hughes, Chair
Senator Robert Myers, Vice Chair
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Lyman Hoffman
Senator David Wilson

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 72

"An Act relating to civics education, civics examinations, and secondary school graduation requirements; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 17

"An Act relating to the retrofitting of certain public facilities and community facilities; relating to the performance of energy audits on schools and community facilities; relating to the duties of the Alaska Energy Authority and the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation; creating a rapid economic recovery office in the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority; and relating to the state energy policy and energy source reporting by state agencies."

- MOVED CSSB 17(CRA) OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 72

SHORT TITLE: SEC. SCHOOL CIVICS EDUCATION

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) STEVENS

02/05/21	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/05/21	(S)	EDC, CRA

03/10/21	(S)	EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
03/10/21	(S)	Heard & Held
03/10/21	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/19/21	(S)	EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
03/19/21	(S)	-- Invited & Public Testimony --
03/22/21	(S)	EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
03/22/21	(S)	Scheduled but Not Heard
03/24/21	(S)	EDC RPT CS 5DP NEW TITLE
03/24/21	(S)	DP: HOLLAND, HUGHES, STEVENS, MICCICHE, BEGICH
03/24/21	(S)	EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
03/24/21	(S)	Moved CSSB 72(EDC) Out of Committee
03/24/21	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/30/21	(S)	CRA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/30/21	(S)	Heard & Held
03/30/21	(S)	MINUTE(CRA)
04/08/21	(S)	CRA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SB 17

SHORT TITLE: ENERGY EFFICIENCY & POLICY: PUB. BLDGS

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) BEGICH

01/22/21	(S)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/8/21
01/22/21	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/22/21	(S)	CRA, L&C, FIN
02/25/21	(S)	CRA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
02/25/21	(S)	Heard & Held
02/25/21	(S)	MINUTE(CRA)
03/30/21	(S)	CRA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/30/21	(S)	Heard & Held
03/30/21	(S)	MINUTE(CRA)
04/08/21	(S)	CRA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

WITNESS REGISTER

SENATOR GARY STEVENS
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of SB 72.

DAWSON MANN, Staff
Senator Shelley Hughes
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Reviewed the committee substitute for SB 72.

STUART THOMPSON, representing self
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 72.

MIKE COONS, representing self
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition of SB 72.

GWEN WOODARD, representing self
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 72.

CHRISTINE HUTCHISON, representing self
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 72.

SENATOR TOM BEGICH
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of SB 17.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:30:07 PM](#)

CHAIR SHELLEY HUGHES called the Senate Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Myers, Gray-Jackson, and Chair Hughes.

SB 72-SEC. SCHOOL CIVICS EDUCATION

[3:30:41 PM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 72 "An Act relating to civics education, civics examinations, and secondary school graduation requirements; and providing for an effective date."

She noted there was a committee substitute for the committee to consider.

[3:31:29 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS moved to adopt committee substitute (CS) for SB 72, work order 32-LS0478\W, as the working document.

[3:31:44 PM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES objected for discussion purposes.

[3:31:57 PM](#)

SENATOR GARY STEVENS, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of SB 72, said he thinks the bill is important and he does not object to the changes. He asked Senator Myers if he has read the Federalist Papers and all of its 85 essays.

SENATOR MYERS replied he has.

SENATOR STEVENS asked if he read all 360 pages of the Federalist Papers. He stated, "Three hundred and sixty pages, Senator. You are asking the Board of Education to read all those pages plus other historical documents. That is an enormous thing to ask of them, and that is okay with me if you want to do that."

He said he taught United States history at the University of Alaska and he did read the 85 articles and essays of the Federalist Papers, but he did not believe that many people have.

SENATOR MYERS confirmed he read the Federalist Papers. He explained the point he was getting at with his suggested changes to the bill was to address his concern that the bill requires the state create civics education with very little direction to "what we want in there."

He stated bad civics curriculum could be worse than none at all. He explained he wanted to make sure to provide direction for creating the civics curriculum and his suggestions would move in that direction.

[3:34:11 PM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES noted the committee has not gone through the summary of changes, but as she reads the bill, there is no requirement to read everything. She noted historical documents are research sources for teaching government citizenship, the history of United States government systems, and the history of American constitutionalism.

She said there would probably be historical document references rather than assigned student reading, something she believes is reasonable. She asked the sponsor if he read that differently.

SENATOR STEVENS replied he is not saying the students should read the historical documents, but the CS asks the State School Board to read the historical documents and it is asking an enormous amount.

CHAIR HUGHES specified the legislative intent does not ask anybody to read all the historical documents but rather to use portions of the documents as references.

She asked Senator Meyers if he agreed with her assessment.

SENATOR MYERS answered yes. He said regarding the constitutional intent explanations, there are certain portions that are still extremely relevant and continue to provide timely wisdom.

He stated he is not suggesting that the entire State Board needs to read through the historical documents, but there already is plenty of commentary on them that would help in crafting the civics curriculum.

[3:36:26 PM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES thanked him for the clarification.

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON asked if now was the appropriate time to share her comments on the CS.

CHAIR HUGHES suggested the committee first receive the sectional analysis and then the committee will entertain questions.

[3:37:15 PM](#)

DAWSON MANN, Staff, Senator Shelley Hughes, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, paraphrased the explanation of changes in CSSB 72 from version I to version W:

Sec. 1 - AS 14.03 Page 1, Lines 4-14, Page 2, Lines 1-13

Adds history of American constitutionalism as portrayed in the listed documents to the requirements of the civics curriculum and assessment.

Adds a requirement that schools include a student's civics assessment score on the student's transcript.

Adds a requirement that districts must report student performance on the civics assessment and curriculum to the department along with an average of district test scores on the assessment

[3:38:55 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON stated she appreciated Senator Stevens' comments because they make sense in terms of the number of papers that the State Board is going to have to read.

She noted Senator Myers mentioned "bad curriculum." She said personally, she does not think there is any such thing as "bad curriculum," especially with SB 72 in teaching civics.

She remarked the bill as presented from the Senate Education Committee is just fine and she does not agree with the CS at all and will not support it.

[3:39:34 PM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES maintained her objection so that the committee can continue its discussion.

She pointed out that the committee reached out to Ms. Medicine Crow in regard to the tribal government to see if she might have a suggestion of some things that she might itemize for review assurance; the committee has not heard back from her, but there may be an opportunity for that.

She noted previous conversations during the committee meeting that the [historical documents] are to be sources and do not have to be thoroughly read with everything used either by the State Board or students.

CHAIR HUGHES asked Senator Stevens if he had any remarks.

SENATOR STEVENS stated he is not happy with the historical document list and viewed the list as unnecessary. He said there will be professionals writing the curriculum and there is no need for being so prescriptive. He said he is fine with the other addition in the CS on the assessment scores.

[3:41:11 PM](#)

At ease

[3:42:52 PM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES reconvened the meeting and announced an additional period for amendments for SB 72.

[3:43:32 PM](#)

At ease

[3:43:42 PM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES reconvened the meeting and opened public testimony on SB 72.

3:44:11 PM

STUART THOMPSON, representing self, Wasilla, Alaska, testified in support of SB 72. He said the graduating high school student testing to verify affective grasps of civics is constitutionally justified and critical to posterity.

3:48:28 PM

MIKE COONS, representing self, Palmer, Alaska, testified in opposition of SB 72. He said he has reservations about the bill due to confusing civics curriculum language. He noted the Mat-Su School District is using national and DEED standards for its civics curriculum and his hope is other school districts will do the same. The Mat-Su District also teaches Alaska history that covers government used by Alaska Natives.

He said Alaska needs upcoming adult populations to understand their duty as proud American citizens. He stated the bill requires substantive amendments to ensure the students are taught the truth about government and the constitution.

3:51:30 PM

GWEN WOODARD, representing self, Kenai, Alaska, testified in support of SB 72. She said Alaska students are expected to vote coming out of high school and having a basic knowledge of civics is necessary.

3:52:11 PM

CHRISTINE HUTCHISON, representing self, Kenai, Alaska, testified in support of SB 72. She noted North Dakota has a requirement for students to pass a civics examination and their high school passage rate was not jeopardized. The bill should not have anything added that is an unfunded mandate and creates a fiscal note. The requirement of a citizen exam is sufficient for teachers to teach to—which they do in North Dakota. She summarized getting the exam into code is critical and adding specific curriculum can occur later.

3:54:42 PM

CHAIR HUGHES closed public testimony on SB 72.

She explained when she signed on as a co-sponsor, the legislation did require the citizenship exam, but that was changed in the last committee of referral. The CS before the committee still requires an assessment test, but it would be

something that DEED would develop. The department might use some of the citizenship exam material and other references.

CHAIR HUGHES noted when she originally signed on as co-sponsor, the bill required high school seniors to pass the citizenship exam. However, the districts pushed back because they felt that would affect graduation rates. She said she was disappointed in that change because students walking out the door with a diploma should be equipped with a solid civics foundation so they will be contributing citizens. Removing that is a problem that requires further discussions with the sponsor of the bill, she said.

[3:56:30 PM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES held SB 72 in committee.

SB 17-ENERGY EFFICIENCY & POLICY: PUB. BLDGS

[3:56:53 PM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 72 "An Act relating to civics education, civics examinations, and secondary school graduation requirements; and providing for an effective date."

[3:57:05 PM](#)

At ease

[3:57:31 PM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES reconvened the meeting. She detailed that the committee adopted a committee substitute (CS) on March 30 and heard public testimony. She asked the sponsor if he had any closing comments before the bill moves from committee.

[3:58:06 PM](#)

SENATOR TOM BEGICH, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of SB 17, explained the current version of the bill takes a 2010 bill that had two major factors: 1) setting energy policy around clean energy and 2) setting policy around retrofitting a building.

He detailed the bill takes current state policy and sets the retrofitting policy threshold from 10,000 square feet to 5,000 square feet and includes other public buildings in the mix. For example, school district buildings or buildings of 5,000 square feet and greater that are recipients of Power Cost Equalization (PCE) funds. The bill also sets targets for clean energy aligning with currently terminology.

CHAIR HUGHES thanked Senator Begich for bringing the bill forward.

3:59:30 PM

SENATOR MYERS moved to report CSSB 17(CRA), work order 32-LS0187\B, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s).

3:59:45 PM

CHAIR HUGHES found no objection and CSSB 17(CRA) was reported from the Senate Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee.

3:59:50 PM

At ease

4:01:20 PM

CHAIR HUGHES reconvened the meeting and reviewed the agenda for the following week.

4:02:07 PM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Hughes adjourned the Senate Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting at 4:02 p.m.